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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9969

INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000507

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDING INFO ADDRESSEE

SIPDIS

FOR OPS CENTER, WHA/CEN AND CA/OCS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/28/2019

TAGS: PGOV CASC MARR HO

SUBJECT: HONDURAN COUP: SITREP 3, 06/28/09, 16:00 LOCAL TIME

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 506 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: amb. Hugo Llorens, e.o. 12958 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Congress officially named Roberto Micheletti interim President of the Republic at approximately 14:15 local time, despite urging by the Ambassador to avoid taking that step. He was sworn in at 15:40. Local channels began transmitting live session of Congress around 13:30, with the Congressional leadership defending the military action and Toribio Aguilera of the social-democrat PINU party criticizing the Ambassador's remarks condemning the coup.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador gave a press conference outside the Embassy at 11:30, which was carried on Channel 11, a generally Zelaya-sympathetic channel that was briefly back on the air, just after 13:00. The Ambassador insisted that President Zelaya was the only democratically elected president of the country and urged that freedom of expression and circulation be restored. He also demanded the release of those government officials said to be in military custody. Transmission of the Ambassador's press conference was followed immediately by a telephone interview with Minister of the Presidency Enrique Flores Lanza. Broadcast was once again terminated in the middle of Flores Lanza's interview, as Flores Lanza was explaining that the resignation letter President Zelaya had purportedly submitted was a forgery.

¶3. (C) The EAC convened at 14:00 local time to assess the situation. Authorized departure for family members was discussed, but it was determined that such a step was not warranted at this time. It was agreed the Embassy would be open June 29, but only essential staff would need to report for duty, and there would be no public services. Embassy personnel would be advised to remain in their homes for the rest of the day June 28 and to limit their movements June 29.

Protest activity has been centered around the Presidential Palace, where between 1,000 and 1,500 people are said to be gathered. About 100 were reported in front of the Congress. Some roads are blocked and there are a few troops on the streets, but traffic is flowing normally in most of the city.

Embassy personnel have been able to come and go to and from the airport without problem. All Peace Corps volunteers have been accounted for and are on standfast. A new group is scheduled to arrive July 1. Borders remain open. Consular section has received about 60 welfare and whereabouts inquiries. There has been talk of a curfew, but nothing has been announced yet. An updated warden message will be sent

out before the end of the day. Embassy is recommending that CA advise Amcits to postpone non-essential travel to Honduras. A decision on the Fourth of July reception will be deferred. Minister of Security Jorge Rodas Gamero told EmbOff there had been no incidents of violence or unrest beyond the minor ones noted in Sitrep 2 (reftel).

¶4. (C) The Ambassador spoke by phone to FM Patricia Rodas, then under house arrest, earlier today. Embassy has learned that she has since been released, and according to the Mexican ambassador she boarded a plan for Costa Rica to join President Zelaya. She reported there had been some pushing and shoving at some point when the Cuban and Venezuelan ambassadors arrived to show solidarity with her.

¶5. (C) Ambassador has also spoken twice today to First Lady Xiomara Castro, who is in Olancho. He offered to provide safety for her and her children at the residence or in the Embassy. She was much calmer in the second conversation, after the Ambassador's remarks had been carried on television. Presidential Secretary Enrique Reina reports he is safe in a European Embassy. Zelaya confidantes Milton Jimenez and Raul Valladares are also accounted for and said to be safe.

¶6. (C) There was a rumor around 12:00 that Administrative Vice President Aristedes Mejia was arrested upon landing at Toncontin airport (inbound on American Airlines from Miami.) An ORA source refuted the rumor. Mejia never made it on the plane. An online news service reported at 14:50 that Cesar Ham, a congressman and presidential candidate for the leftist Democratic Unification Party who has aligned himself with Zelaya on the constitutional reform issue, was killed resisting arrest. Embassy has confirmed that rumor is also false.

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¶7. (U) Internet service has been restored. Landline communication is intermittent. Broadcast and cable news channels have been transmitting sporadically. Congress is in session and still broadcasting live as of 16:00. Micheletti, in his acceptance speech, has committed to hold the most transparent elections in Honduran History on November 29.

¶8. (C) A Peace Corps contact reported that the military garrison in Marcala, La Paz Department, had taken over the City Hall.

LLORENS